

Message Text

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DEF ALSO FOR JCS

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SUBJ: U.S. MILITARY GROUP VENEZUELA MANPOWER PROJECTION

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE U.S. MILGP COMMANDER'S FY 77 JOINT
MANPOWER PROGRAM IS BASED ON A GOV REORGANIZATION PLAN FOR U.S.
MILGP, WHICH WOULD REDUCE THE MILGP STAFF BY 37 PERCENT AND CENTRALIZ
E
MOST OF ITS ACTIVITIES AT THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE LEVEL. THIS
PERSONNEL REDUCTION, WHILE IT WOULD LESSEN SERVICE-TO-SERVICE
CONTACTS, WOULD BE IN LINE WITH CURRENT JCS PLANS TO REDUCE THE MILGP
STAFF, WOULD MAKE THE MILGP LESS VULNERABLE TO POLITICAL ATTACK,
AND WOULD MAKE THE VENEZUELAN ARMED FORCES MORE SELF-SUFFICIENT.
END SUMMARY.

1. THE COMMANDER OF THE U.S. MILGP VENEZUELA HAS JUST SUBMITTED TO
USCINCSO A PROPOSED FY 77 JOINT MANPOWER PROGRAM AND I CONCUR IN
THE MANPOWER LEVELS PROJECTED IN THIS PROGRAM. THESE PROJECTIONS
ARE BASED UPON A GOV REORGANIZATION PLAN FOR THE U.S. MILGP. THE
DEFENSE MINISTRY'S JOINT STAFF INFORMED THE MILGP COMMANDER ON
OCTOBER 1 THAT THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE HAD APPROVED THIS REORGANIZATI
ON
PLAN, AND THE EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS THAT THE VENEZUELAN CABINET HAD
ENDORSED THE PLAN IN MID-SEPTEMBER.

2. IN ESSENCE, THIS REORGANIZATION PLAN CALLS FOR A REDUCTION IN
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MILGP MILITARY STRENGTH FROM 30 TO 19. ITS PRINCIPAL FEATURE IS

THAT IT ELIMINATES THE FOUR SECTIONS ASSIGNED TO THE SEPARATE VENEZUELAN SERVICES (ARMY, NAVY, AIR FORCE, NATIONAL GUARD) AND CENTRALIZES THE BULK OF ACTIVITIES IN MILGP HEADQUARTERS. SERVICE-TO-SERVICE CONTACT WILL BE MAINTAINED, ALTHOUGH WITHOUT THE FORMER DEPTH, THROUGH THE PRESENCE OF A SENIOR U.S. MILITARY OFFICER WHO WILL BE CO-LOCATED WITH THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF EACH OF THE FOUR SUPPORTED FORCES. ADDITIONALLY, THE PROPOSED PLAN RETAINS AN ADVISOR WITH THE VENEZUELAN MARINE CORPS AND ADDS ONE TO THE DEFENSE MINISTRY'S GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION. PRESENT GOV PLANS ARE THAT MILGP HEADQUARTERS WILL MOVE INTO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE BUILDING.

3. I FIND IT GRATIFYING -- AND A TRIBUTE TO THE MILGP'S EXCELLENT WORK HERE -- THAT FOLLOWING CAREFUL STUDY AND IN THE FACE OF CONTINUING LEFT-WING POLITICAL PRESSURES AGAINST THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THE MILGP, THE GOV AT HIGH LEVEL HAS CHOSEN TO RETAIN THE U.S. MILGP IN VENEZUELA. THIS DECISION HAS GIVEN THE MILGP A FRESH LEGITIMACY, WHICH SHOULD PROVIDE THE U.S. WITH A LONG-TERM BASE OF INFLUENCE WITHIN THE VENEZUELAN ARMED FORCES. THIS REORGANIZATION PLAN WOULD ALSO MAKE THE VENEZUELAN ARMED FORCES MORE SELF-SUFFICIENT , BY REDUCING THEIR DEPENDENCE UPON THE MILGP FOR ASSORTED DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS AND BY CONCENTRATING MORE MILGP EFFORT ON BROADER MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS.

4. THE MANPOWER REDUCTION FLOWING FROM THIS PLAN COULD HAVE THE ADVERSE EFFECT OF REDUCING THE IN-DEPTH SERVICE-TO-SERVICE CONTACTS NOW MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THE EXISTENCE OF THE WELL-STAFFED MILGP SECTIONS PRESENTLY ATTACHED TO THE INDIVIDUAL SERVICES. THE COMMANDER OF THE VENEZUELAN AIR FORCE, MAJOR GENERAL PAREDES BELLO, HAS TOLD U.S. OFFICIALS PRIVATELY THAT HE IS OPPOSED TO THESE CUTBACKS, SINCE THEY WOULD REDUCE THE MILGP COMPONENT IN HIS HEADQUARTERS. NONETHELESS, THE JOINT STAFF MAINTAINS THAT IT COORDINATED THIS REORGANIZATION PLAN WITH THE INDIVIDUAL SERVICE CHIEFS. THE MILGP REDUCTION (TO 22 BY FY 80) ENVISAGED BY THE PRESENT JCS-APPROVED JOINT MANPOWER PROGRAM WOULD PROBABLY NECESSITATE A SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION IN THE MILGP SERVICE SECTIONS IN ANY CASE.

5. INTERESTED WASHINGTON AGENCIES WILL PRESUMABLY HAVE AN
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OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE THEIR VIEWS ON THESE REDUCED MANPOWER LEVELS WHEN SOUTHCOM HEADQUARTERS FORWARDS ITS JOINT MANPOWER PROGRAMS FOR THE SOUTHERN COMMAND. I CONSIDER THAT TYING THE FY 77 MANPOWER LEVELS TO THE GOV REORGANIZATION PLAN WILL ENHANCE THE MILGP'S LONG-TERM ABILITY TO MAINTAIN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE VENEZUELAN ARMED FORCES. A SOMEWHAT SMALLER MILGP SHOULD ENABLE US TO ACHIEVE U.S. OBJECTIVES WITH LOWER VISIBILITY AND AT REDUCED COST.
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